

Draw-Down At Lake Shenandoah

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries plans to lower the water level of Lake Shenandoah in Rockingham County starting in late November. The 36 acre state owned reservoir is a popular destination for anglers and boaters in the Harrisonburg area. Two embayments of the lake have filled with sediment over the years and no longer provide adequate fish habitat. In order to determine the feasibility of renovating the lake, the Department needs to lower the lake level approximately 3-5 feet. Once the exposed sediments have dried and the Department has conducted its assessment, the water level will be returned to full-pool. Refilling the reservoir will depend upon precipitation. The Department anticipates that the lake will be back to full pool by late winter prior to the beginning of fishing season.

While the lake level is lowered the boat ramp in the parking area will be closed to launching boats. Angler access from the shoreline at the South end of the lake will also be affected. Anglers wishing to fish the lake during the draw-down period will have to focus on the North end of the reservoir near the dam. In 2007 aquatic vegetation took over the shallow areas of the lake and this winter draw-down should help minimize the vegetation in 2008. The bluegill and black crappie populations in Lake Shenandoah have been “stunted” for many years. There are high numbers of these species, but their growth rates are slow and very few are reaching desirable sizes. An additional benefit of this winter draw-down will place these smaller sunfish in closer proximity to predators and should help restructure the sunfish and crappie population to larger and faster-growing individuals. Questions concerning the winter draw-down at Lake Shenandoah should be directed to Stephen Reeser, DGIF District Fisheries Biologist, in Verona at 540-248-9360.